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Jacksonville District

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Corps of Engineers adjusts Lake Okeechobee releases

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District began redistributing Lake Okeechobee water releases today, Dec. 15.

Starting at 7 a.m., water managers discontinued releases to the St. Lucie Canal and adjusted the constant release to the Caloosahatchee Estuary from 450 to 650 cubic feet per second (cfs) as measured from W.P Franklin Lock and Dam (S-79). The adjustments help maintain salinity concentrations in both estuaries, which are appropriate for sustaining the health of the estuary.

The lake stage today is 14.17 feet (NGVD), more than a foot below where it was after Tropical Storm Fay occurred in September, and about four feet higher than it was a year ago.

In determining whether releases from Lake Okeechobee should or should not be made, water managers look at a variety of factors. For example, it appears that low-level releases of 200 cfs to the St. Lucie Canal are not needed for the environmental health of the estuary at this time. On the other hand, the adjustment will provide benefits to the Caloosahatchee.

The health of Lake Okeechobee is rebounding well as water levels slowly recede, and the current lake level does not pose a threat to the Herbert Hoover Dike. In addition, the long-term weather forecast indicates the possibility of a drier than normal dry season this year.

“Given these conditions, we have determined that releasing an additional 200 cfs via the Caloosahatchee – rather than releasing it to the east – helps provide additional benefits,” said Col. Paul Grosskruger, Jacksonville District commander. “We will always work hard to strike a balance in a system that must support multiple purposes.”

The releases measured at the S-79 will take into consideration basin inflow into the Caloosahatchee from Moore Haven (S-77) to the W.P. Franklin (S-79).



After a two-year study, in April 2008 the Corps approved a new regulation schedule that balanced often-conflicting water needs in South Florida. Under the 2008 LORS, water managers try to maintain Lake Okeechobee within the preferred range, between 12.5 to 15.5 feet throughout the year.

“From all reports, Lake Okeechobee is rebounding from two years of drought and many years of high water – that’s great news for the lake, lakeside communities and recreationalists who come from all over the country,” Grosskruger said.

On Sept. 6, 2008, the Corps made its first water releases from Lake Okeechobee under the 2008 LORS after the 720-square-mile lake rose more than four feet in 30 days, due primarily to Tropical Storm Fay rainfall.

For more information, please call the Jacksonville District Corporate Communication Office at 904-232-1953. Interested parties can also learn more about water level data and flows for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project by visiting www.saj.usace.army.mil, go to Popular Pages, and scroll down to Water Management.